

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 169516

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:MILI, BM

SUBJECT: ARMORED CARS

1. THE CADILLAC GAGE COMPANY HAS WRITTEN THE DEPARTMENT TO STATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF BURMA HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THEM REGARDING THE POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF NINE OR TEN V-150 ARMORED CARS WITH TURRETS MOUNTING EITHER 20MM OR 76MM WEAPONS. CADILLAC GAGE REQUESTS AN ADVISORY OPINION AS TO WHETHER AN EXPORT LICENSE WOULD BE GRANTED.

2. THE EMBASSY WILL RECALL THAT A LICENSE TO EXPORT V-150 CARS EQUIPPED WITH 30/50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN TURRETS WAS DENIED BECAUSE THERE WAS GOOD INFORMATION THAT THE VEHICLES WERE TO BE USED IN RIOT CONTROL SITUATIONS. THE DECISION WAS A CLOSELY BALANCED ONE, BUT WE THOUGHT THAT U.S. IDENTIFICATION WITH SUCH ACTIVITY WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE. WE SO INFORMED THE BURMESE EMBASSY HERE IN WASHINGTON, BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE SPECIFICALLY LET THEM KNOW THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO FACILITATE THEIR OBTAINING OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD NOT BE AS DIRECTLY SUITABLE FOR
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ACTIVITY WITH WHICH WE DID NOT WISH TO BECOME IDENTIFIED.

3. IT OCCURS TO US THAT ARMORED CARS WITH 20MM OR 76MM WEAPONS WOULD NOT BE PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE FOR RIOT

CONTROL PURPOSES EVEN THOUGH THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY BE SO USED. CADILLAC GAGE'S SALES BROCHURE, FOR EXAMPLE, DEPICTS SUCH VEHICLES AS MOUNTING A "COAX MACHINE GUN" WHICH COULD BE TURNED AGAINST URBAN CROWDS, WITH THE HEAVIER WEAPON HAVING A STRONG PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT.

4. ACCORDINGLY, WE WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING IF THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED ANY INDICATION THAT THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT IS REALLY INTERESTED IN PURCHASING THESE MORE HEAVILY ARMED CARS AND IF SO, WHAT WOULD BE THEIR INTENDED USE. WE REALIZE THAT THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN CONTROL WHAT THE GUB DOES WITH THESE CARS, AND WE ARE AWARE THAT MILITARY AND POLITICAL EXIGENCIES COULD CAUSE THE BURMESE TO PUT THEM TO USES WHICH THEY MIGHT NOT BE CONSIDERING AT THE PRESENT TIME. NEVERTHELESS, A CURRENT APPARENTLY SINCERE INTENTION TO USE THEM AGAINST OPIUM-TRAFFICKING INSURGENTS, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD GIVE US FEW PROBLEMS, BUT WE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY GRANTING AN EXPORT LICENSE IF IT WERE CLEAR THAT THE BURMESE STILL WANTED THESE CARS TO DEAL WITH CIVIL UNREST IN RANGOON. KISSINGER

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